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INDIAN INDIA

INDIAN INDIA

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DEWAN'S PUBLICATIONS
LAHORE

Second Impression

CONTENTS

States and Their Rulers	7
States and Their Subjects	19
States and Congress	28
States and Satyagraha	37
States and Praja Mandals	47

STATES AND THEIR RULERS

You have, I fear, evaded the question of Princes. Generally, you go straight to your subject, but, somehow or other, you seem to have walked round this subject.

Apparently, but not really, there is some truth in the taunt. The fact is that the Princes have never before now been presented as a difficulty. They are a new arrow from the British quiver. It is British India that is fighting for freedom. The States' people are fighting their own battle in their own States against overwhelming odds. The people in the States and in British India are one. For them, the artificial boundaries do not exist. But for the administrators the boundaries are very real. British law has allowed Princes to regard as foreigners people from British India going to the States or people from one State to another. And yet Princes exist only on British sufferance. They cannot move without British permission. Their heirs have to be approved by the British *Raj*. Their tuition is also under the same supervision. They can be deposed at will. Thus, so far as the British control is concerned, they are worse off than the ordinary British subject. But so far as their people are concerned, the Princes have unlimited control over them. They can imprison them at will, and even put them to death. Theoretically, British *Raj* has a duty by the people also. But it is rarely exercised. Therefore, the people of the States labour under a double handicap. It must be clear to you from the foregoing narrative that the Congress cannot influence the Princes except through the British Government. Indeed, the latter will not permit any real approach to the Princes. I personally do not desire the extinction of the Princely Order. But I do want the Princes to recognise the signs of the times

and shed a large part of their autocracy. In spite of the powerful British bayonet, the march of the people of both the Indias cannot be stayed. I am hoping that the combined wisdom of all, including the Princes and the present rulers, will prevent the march from running mad, which it is bound to do unless a smooth passage is made for it. I am putting forth the best non-violent effort I can, but my non-violence, because of my imperfections, may fail. I ask for the helping hand of those who would see India win her goal without a blood bath.

But if the Princes will not listen, I do not ask for their coercion. Let British India have her independence, and I know, the Princes know, that true freedom of British India means freedom of their people also. For, as I have said, the two are one. No power on earth can keep them in separation for all time.

[HARIJAN—*March 23, 1940*]

I must painfully tell you that you have put us in a very awkward fix by sealing our lips, and unless you release us from this disability, you will unman us altogether. Even the restrictions imposed by Sjt. Mansukhlal, which you decried, were far more liberal than the disabilities that you have now imposed. For, whereas the former, at least, permitted people to criticise individual States in cases of 'flagrant injustice' you have deprived them even of that right. This is intolerable. Is it not rather curious that whereas in British India the slightest wrong is enough to make you flare up in righteous indignation, you won't allow even a single condemnatory syllable to be uttered against any individual State, though it might perpetrate the worst tyranny on its innocent *ryots*? It is time that you reconsidered your self-denying ordinance. And if you cannot withdraw it altogether, you should at least revise it to

the extent of restoring the liberty to protest against cases of 'flagrant injustice.' Remember, at Bhavnagar, you undertook to obtain a redress of our grievances. Now that you have been disappointed in your efforts, does it not become your sacred duty to ventilate those questions before the public? But that duty you have not discharged yet and have prevented others from discharging. That is why we are today ground down by oppression. Freedom of public discussion is our sacred and inalienable right and you ought to teach the Kathiawad public to exercise that right. But you are doing just the reverse and by your curious silence are in fact conniving at the wrong. In moments of despair, I am tempted to charge you with showing an undue partiality towards the States. It is time that you escaped from the a mospHERE of unreality created around you by the Kathiawad diplomats, and turned the battery of your righteous indignation to the 'flagrant wrongs' that lie beyond it, and give the same liberty to others. Won't you remember and make good the promise you made at Bhavnagar?

The Kathiawadi friend in question has an undoubted right to write to me as he has done, just as it is my duty to give a patient hearing to what the youth might have to say. Every duty performed confers upon one certain rights, whilst the exercise of every right carries with it certain corresponding obligations. And so the never-ending cycle of duty and right goes ceaselessly on. In the present case, for instance, the Kathiawadi youth began by exercising his right to pour fourth his grief to me. I discharge my duty by giving him a patient hearing, with the result that the right to speak out my mind to the Kathiawadi youth has now accrued to me, and it is the duty of the Kathiawadi youth in question to hear and try inwardly to digest

and assimilate what I might have to say.

I very well remember the promise I made at Bhavnagar. I have not yet lost hope. My efforts still continue, but their result is not in my hands, but in the hands of God who alone controls results. Nor is it necessary that my efforts in this direction should be before the public or involve my personally meeting the rulers in question. They may or may not even be direct, indeed, they may begin and end with a heart-felt prayer. Let no one laugh at this. I want to enter into no special pleading on my behalf. I mention this method of work because it is part and parcel of my life. For years together in South Africa, my efforts consisted practically only in waiting and prayer, and it is my firm conviction that that period of silent prayer was the most fruitful for that work.

It constituted the bedrock on which whatever little was accomplished was based. Even today, perhaps, I may be said to be doing nothing tangible for the attainment of Hindu-Muslim unity, yet it is my claim that I am striving for it ceaselessly. Even so, in the matter of the Indian States, I am always on the look out for an opportunity. Opportunities have always come to me for the waiting and praying. Let no one, therefore, be led away to think that I have ceased to concern myself about the question of the Indian States or to do anything in that behalf.

But I know that the impatient reader can judge my efforts only in the light of concrete tangible results. He may, therefore, well feel angry if he fails to understand my way of doing things. I must hold my soul in patience.

I may not here enter into a discussion of Mansukhlal's restrictions. My opinion, in that respect, has not undergone the least change.

But circumstances alter cases. I have simply laid down the indispensable conditions for the holding of conferences in the Indian States. If such conferences must be held at all, without observing these restrictions, I maintain that it is not possible as yet to hold conferences within the boundaries of the States.

But these restrictions apply to conferences only, they do not affect individual action. Any one in his individual capacity has always perfect liberty to criticise as much as he likes any Indian Prince, subject only to the measure of his own strength and considerations of sobriety and common sense.

Again, I have never suggested that individual rulers of Indian States may never be criticised or that conferences, untrammelled by any restrictions, may not be held at all. On the contrary, I hold that "there is nothing improper in holding, in British territory, conferences at which individual States may be freely criticised. There is also the undoubted right of the subjects of any State to criticise the administration of that State within its own border. That this right is not fully exercised today is a matter of deep sorrow.

It is true that personally I do not, through *Navajivan* or otherwise, criticise individual rulers. But that is different matter altogether. I claim to be a practical man. I have got a fair measure of my strength and I know how to conserve it. I have deliberately cultivated the habit of avoiding a useless or superfluous word. I do not hesitate unsparingly to denounce all wrongs, great and small, in British territory because I know that such denunciation is backed by consciousness of potential strength. In the case of the States, though I am not unaware of the terrible things going on in some of them, I have no strength to back my exposure of the wrongs.

I disclaim any undue partiality for the States. At the same time I owe them no grudge; I do not desire their destruction. There is an abundant scope for reform in them which it should not be impossible to effect today. But it is my firm belief that it is impossible to reform the States in the true sense while India is in bondage. It may be possible to obtain redress here and there in cases of flagrant injustice by leading a crusade against it. But such tinkering does not interest me. It gives me no satisfaction. I am, therefore, today concentrating all my energy on the root evil. If I can effectively touch the root, the

branches will in time drop down of their own accord. Whereas, on the contrary, to divert public attention from the root evil and mobilise it against the branch evils in the States, would mean lending an additional lease of life to the former. That is a risk that I, for one, am not prepared to run.

Let no one, however, understand me to mean from this that no action whatsoever is at present possible in the case of the States. I shall repeat here what I have already said. Wherever the subjects of States are ready for it, they can and ought to organise an agitation against maladministration in that State, especially if they have the strength to make use of the never-failing weapon of *satyagraha*. But it is a matter of deep sorrow to me that today the ruled are often tools in the hands of wicked rulers. Grinding operation has rendered the people nerveless. No one has yet been able to save goats from the clutches of tigers. The goats' emancipation would be possible only if one could envisage the goat-world itself giving birth to its would-be emancipator. Though reduced to the position of the goat man is today in this country, especially in the States, all hope is not lost for him. He belongs to a higher species. Strength lies dormant in the weak. If they find an environment in which bipeds exactly like them exhibit strength, it is not unlikely that they will catch the infection. Bardoli was only a modest forerunner—a beam from the powerful sun. If Bardoli exhibited the full strength and qualifications necessary for full *satyagraha*, its example would spread throughout the length and breadth of the land, and we should find ourselves, including the people of the States, a free nation.

[YOUNG INDIA—*August 29, 1929*]

You have advised the British to withdraw. About the Princes you say : “ But I would fain hope that the Princes and their advisers will, for their own sakes and for the good of India, curb the tendency in many States which cannot be described by any other

adjective than lawless." Why not ask the Princes, whose tyranny is older and, perhaps, more deep-rooted than that of the British, to abdicate immediately ?

I am surprised that the Professor has failed to see the distinction between the Princes and the Paramount Power. The Princes (present) are a creation of the Paramount Power. They derive their authority from it. Their abdication will not end the Princely rule. Another will immediately take the vacant place and in the absence of one, the State will be under British administration. Thus, whichever way you look, you will find the British Power by its very nature blocking the way to Truth.

[HARIJAN—May 31, 1942]

May I take the liberty of writing to you with a view to draw your attention to the problem of Kathiawad States ? A close study of the States comprising the Western India Agency will convince any one that the real problem of Kathiawad is not that of responsible government in individual States. That, in fact, is a demand very much beyond the ken of economic possibility. None of these States, with the exception of five or six, can afford to be genuine, separate, self-governing, units. Economic considerations apart, their geographical contiguity, and cultural and linguistic unity positively point towards the desirability of grouping them all administratively. A confederation of these States alone can bring their people on a par with the people of Bombay Province or, for that matter, any other province in British India.

As to the fear that the Princes might strongly dislike such a move, it might be said that one cannot hope to go through any scheme of reform embodying real transference of power to the people without being

confronted by the most dogged opposition from those quarters. And when at all events a fight (of course, a non-violent one) has got to be waged against that opposition, it is only prudent and politic on our part to fight on an issue which should be our main and ultimate demand. Whatever our immediate and minimum demands, the final objective must not be lost sight of. And may I suggest in the case of Kathiawad, as also some three-fourths of the States in India, the final goal of political reformers must be a confederation on the lines roughly foreshadowed in the appended printed articles? I hope you will see that this idea, though by no means new or original, deserves to be popularised. For, collective agitation by a group or cluster of States in favour of confederation, has certain obvious advantages which agitation for reform in a single State cannot have. How much I wish you had worked for the propagation of this idea while you were actively engaged in the Rajkot struggle. Even now, one word of support from you—of course, only if you generally agree with this view—will place this idea on a sound footing.

This important letter was received by me in Abbottabad. The articles appended are cuttings from *The Tribune* of Lahore, specially dealing with the problem. The articles contain an interesting analysis of the Kathiawad States and corroborative quotations from the Butler Committee's Report and a recent pronouncement by the Viceroy. For the moment, I must content myself with heartily supporting the proposal. I do not share the fear of my correspondent about much opposition from the smaller States, if they are sympathetically approached. They will soon realise that their safety lies in some kind of confederation and sharing of power with the people. The chief thing is a dispassionate representation of the problem and creation of

public opinion that cannot be answered or opposed.
[HARIJAN—August 19, 1939]

Ours (Chamba State) is a minority administered State, being directly under the control of the Paramount Power. We have been pressing for the repeal of the liberty-penalising laws which have been enforced during the minority administration, and we do wish that popular element be introduced in the temporary administrative council, at least during the minority of the Raja . . . In a case like ours, the Paramount Power cannot say that it can't intervene. If it has to safeguard the rights of the Ruler, has it not any liability towards the people? . . . Will you throw some light on the question?

The question is pertinent. There is no reason whatsoever why the people of administered States should not enjoy all the liberty that those in British India enjoy. Indeed, a wise and liberal-minded administrator of a State has within his jurisdiction greater opportunity for doing good than one in British India proper. A State administrator has much greater latitude than an official working under the routine of a Prince. The latter is subject to a series of superiors and has only limited powers. An administrator of a State is much more than a Governor in his own little State. He is subject only to general supervision of the Resident of the Agency to which his State belongs. Therefore, there is no excuse whatsoever for any misrule or failure of justice in administered States, if the Paramount Power's policy is declared in unambiguous terms and followed in its entirety. But if the administration is not all it should be, it shows that there is no well-defined policy of the Paramount Power, so far as the people of the States are concerned. There is no insistence on the right being done by the States towards their people. There should be no such thing as policy of non-interference by the Paramount Power, in so far as the elementary rights of the people are concerned. The policy of non-interference

can remain unchallenged only so long as the States' people are ignorant of their strength. But there is nowadays too much consciousness among the people of the States to permit of the policy of non-interference being successful any longer. Denial of justice in administered States should be unthinkable. Let the people of Chamba publish unvarnished facts about the state of things there. I have little doubt that if there is any injustice done there, force of public opinion will secure the needed redress.

Absence of declared policy by the Paramount Power about the rights of the people of the States is perhaps glaringly demonstrated by the happenings in the little Hill State of Dharni. The shooting that took place there would have been impossible if the policy of the Paramount Power was known. The *communiqué* issued by the Political Agent should not be the last word on the tragedy. He had no material before him to enable him to form a correct judgment. Every such firing should be followed up by an open, quick, judicial enquiry. The Chiefs, who get easily frightened and resort to firing, ought not to possess the power they have to-day over the lives of their subjects. But the public, who have to form an opinion, do not have a fair chance of doing so. They cannot set up an authoritative enquiry. And a Political Agent's *communiqué* is no true guide. Take the Dharni *communiqué*. I need not challenge the statements made in it. For aught I know, every word in it may be true. But it cannot command implicit confidence. In its very nature, it is a one-sided document. The Political Agent can produce no legal proof in support of his statements. He does not give the sources of his information. To inspire confidence, there should be a judicial enquiry carrying necessary consequences for the wrong doer or doers, whether the wrong done is on the part of the State or the people. Thus, if the people sought to overwhelm the Rana, it was undoubtedly wrong, as it was if there was defiance of the order against Shri Bhagmal. It was wrong, too, if outsiders join the alleged demonstration. The lightning ultimatum, if it was that, was a

preposterous thing, deserving severe condemnation. Responsible government is made of sterner stuff. If the principality consists of only five thousand persons and the revenue is Rs. 30,000, responsible government is a meaningless term. If people in every principality will take the law into their own hands, they will do irreparable damage to the cause. The All-India States' Conference is there to guide them. Every Praja Mandal should put itself under its guidance, in order to enable it to frame its case for freedom. There seems to be little doubt that there has been undue haste on the people's side.

But what about the Rana? Has he been dealing justly by his people? Was he really in danger of his life to warrant firing in self-defence? Every crowd is not necessarily a hostile crowd. Firing ought not to be treated likely. Human life should have the same value in a State, as in British India. Every firing should be followed by the closest scrutiny and by suitable action, both of a punitive and of a preventive character. It is the duty of the Paramount Power to deprive Chiefs of powers of which they do not know judicious use. The whole question regarding the place of the States in Greater India requires overhauling.

A new epoch has come replacing the old. With the *change of the times, there must be a change in the manners* of all parties,—the Paramount Power, the Princes, their people, and last, but not least, the Congress if it survives the internal crisis that has overtaken it. It will be a mistake for the Paramount Power or the Princes to ignore the Congress, a body under whose shadow the people of the States from the commencement have been accustomed to grow and flourish. The Congress must guide them. Any resenting by the Princes or the Paramount Power of guidance of the people by the Congress must result in an inevitable, but wholly unnecessary, clash. How can a people, who are one in blood and bound together by the closest social and economic ties, be artificially kept apart for any length of time? Instead of suspecting or fearing the Congress, surely, the proper thing for all concerned is to welcome the Congress aid whenever it is available for the

common good of both the Princes and the people.

No doubt, the Congress will have to recognise its own limitations. It can hope to work with effect only if its work is of a friendly and peaceful nature. It has to hold the scales evenly between parties. It must avoid all show of force or coercion. Thus, the reported participation by non-Dhamites in the demonstration should have been impossible under the Congress ægis. The Congress influence can be effectively exercised only if it retains its non-violence. Its only capital is its moral authority. Any other position must lead to internecine feud and bloodshed. Dharni has a lesson which Congress have to take to heart. This I say quite apart from the admitted fact that we do not yet know exactly what happened and where the blame actually lay. In the absence of a proper judicial enquiry, right action becomes impossible.

[HARIJAN—*July 29, 1939*]

The Princes seem to be determined to maintain their privileges even after the departure of the British. Therefore, there is need for a plain declaration that they would have no place in a free India. My feeling is that you have so far shown them more consideration than they deserve.

If you are right in your judgment, the privileges themselves will destroy the Princes. Privileges that service of the people bestows will always persist. But most of the paraphernalia, that 'pomp and circumstance' account for, will most certainly go.

But I cannot make the declaration you will have me to make. It is contrary to the spirit of non-violence, which seeks not to destroy but to purify. That which is beyond purification dies without any outside effort, even as a body which has become wholly diseased dies.

If, after the total withdrawal of the British Power, there is found to be no awakening among the masses, India will be split up into so many feudal strongholds, each striving to swallow the small fry, and some bidding for overlordship. What I am hoping and striving for is an irresistible mass urge on the part of the people, and

an intelligent response on the part of all privileged classes to the popular demand. But because I know that this picture is for the time being imaginary, I am quite prepared for the worst. Hence my statement that I would end the present state of things even at the risk of anarchy reigning supreme in the land.

[HARIJAN—*June 14, 1942*]

What place would you assign to the Princes in democratic India ?

I would give them a fat commission as trustees of their people. I would say to them, however, that they must work for this commission. They would have the same privileges as the British King enjoys. They are, after all, his vassals. They cannot be greater than he. The King of England cannot hang a man. He can only act through proper channels. He is a private citizen, though the first one.

If I can like monarchy at all, I would like the limited monarchy of England. And, why should not the people of the States determine what they want ? As far as justice for the people is concerned, I have already said that their supreme courts must be subject to the High Court of India.

[HARIJAN—*January 13, 1940*]

What is your attitude towards the Indian States and their Rulers ?

My attitude towards the Indian States and their Rulers is that of perfect friendship. I desire a radical reform in their constitution. The condition in many States is most deplorable, but reform has to come from within and it is a matter of adjustment between the Rulers and the subjects, save for such pressure as is bound to be exerted upon them by the expression of enlightened public opinion in their neighbourhood.

o [YOUNG INDIA—*February 25, 1926*]

STATES AND THEIR SUBJECTS

Why did you say nothing about the subjects

their interest to become trustees of their people instead of remaining their masters. In other words, what I have done by correcting myself in Rajkot is to show the true way to the *satyagrahis*. In following it they may find it necessary to lower their immediate demands, but only so as to really hasten their progress to their goal. Therefore, there can be no lowering out of weakness. Every lowering must be out of a due appreciation of the local situation, and the capacity of the workers to cope with it. Here, there is no room for demoralisation and a rout. In cases like Jaipur, of course, there can be no question of lowering. The demand itself is in the lowest pitch. There is no room in it for lowering anything. In a sense, it is one for civil liberty. Civil liberty, consistent with the observance of non-violence, is the first step towards *Swaraj*. It is the breath of political and social life. It is the foundation of freedom. There is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted.

[HARIJAN—June 24, 1939]

You expect us to work by negotiation. But if there is no wish on the other side and the only wish is to humiliate the party of freedom, what is to be done ?

Of course, nothing is to be done except waiting and preparing for suffering and promotion of constructive work.

Absence of wish for negotiation by authority may mean despise or distrust of the party of freedom. In either case, silent work is the remedy. Negotiation has been mentioned as a substitute for the ignoring of, *i.e.*, the despise of, the constituted authority, whether it is the Dewan or any other. And what I have pleaded for is desire and readiness for negotiation. It is not inconceivable that the stage of negotiation may never be reached. If it is not, it must not be for the fault of the *satyagrahis*.

[HARIJAN—June 24, 1939]

STATES AND CONGRESS

*The people in the Indian States desire to ascertain your individual opinion on certain matters affecting themselves, so that we may move the Congress to consider, in the light of your opinion, the desirability of defining its policy on certain questions more precisely than at present, and modifying it somewhat on certain others.

The first question that we would bring to your notice in this connection is the necessity of the Congress taking up for solution problems pertaining to the States. The Congress has now given up its traditional policy of "keeping itself unspotted" from the States. It recruits members in the States and brings them under the control of its district and provincial committees. The accession of strength that it has thus received from the States, is by no means negligible; nor are these members sleeping partners in the Congress activities, although these activities concern mostly British India alone. On the other hand, even in such moments as civil disobedience, they have proved good comrades-in-arms and have cheerfully borne their share of the burden, realising that British India and Indian India are essentially one and indivisible, and that the concerns of one are necessarily the concerns of the other also.

We think that time has now arrived for the Congress to respond to this spirit of good comradeship, exhibited by the States' people by putting all its weight and prestige behind their efforts at self-emancipation. At the Madras (1927) and Calcutta (1928) sessions, the Congress no doubt pleaded for the estab-

*The question is a letter written to Gandhiji by Shri N. C. Kelkar, President, All-India States' People Conference, on June 22, 1934.

lishment of democratic *Swaraj* in the Indian States and extended its sympathy to the inhabitants thereof. The Calcutta resolution is well worth quoting here *in extenso* :

“ This Congress urges on the ruling Princes of the Indian States to introduce responsible government based on representative institutions in the States and to issue immediately proclamations or enact laws guaranteeing elementary and fundamental rights of citizenship such as rights of association, free speech, free press and security of person and property. “ This Congress further assures the people of the Indian States of its sympathy with and support in their legitimate and peaceful struggle for the attainment of full responsible government in the States.”

We have no doubt that a similar resolution will be reiterated at the sessions that will be held hereafter, but may we not hope that the Congressmen in British India will lend active help to the people in the Indian States in achieving political freedom, even as the Congressmen in Indian India gave a measure of help to British Indians in their attempts to realise their destiny ? Of the two, British Indians are much the more advanced, but in fact help has flowed far more from the States’ people to British Indians than from British Indians to the States’ people. Do you not think it desirable to advise British Indians, in the name of the Congress, to support actively, even by undergoing suffering, if necessary, all legitimate movements for the establishment of popular government in the Indian States under the ægis of their rulers ? Such comradeship shown on both sides, it appears to us, will cement the two Indias far more firmly than any former federation can. Another question, of even greater urgency, on which the Congress must determine its policy,

is its attitude towards those parts of the White Paper scheme which relate to the Indian States. The authorities of the Congress have declared the scheme to be unacceptable because it does not satisfy the aspirations of the Indian people. May we say that the provisions concerning the States are far from acceptable to the States' people, and may we hope that the actual acceptance or otherwise of these provisions will be made to depend upon their wishes? The future constitution of India, which, according to the Congress intentions, is to take the place of the White Paper constitution, will be based upon the principle of self-determination given effect to by a Constituent Assembly. Is it implied that the federal scheme that will be evolved by this Assembly will be the result of an agreement between the people in British India on the one hand, and those in the Indian States on the other?

While on this subject, it would be well to refer to the apprehensions that have arisen in the mind of the Indian States' people by some passages in your speeches at the Round Table Conference. You pleaded earnestly in this Conference with the rulers of the Indian States for allowing the States' representatives in the federal legislature, to be chosen by election and for allowing the fundamental rights of the States' people to be written into the Federal Constitution and placed under the protection of the Federal Court. But your pleadings on this occasion have given rise to an impression that if the Princes did not agree, as they did not and do not agree, you would accept a constitution in which provisions of the kind that you suggested did not find a place. If this impression is well founded, we cannot help saying, and saying it straight out, that you have done a grave

wrong to the States' people. If you think that nomination by the Princes, for instance, must be acquiesced in, if necessary, in the existing circumstances, we will only beg you to refer the matter to the States' people themselves, in order to ascertain what their wishes are in this respect. The right of self-determination of the Indian States' people is no less sacred than that of British Indians. But it has been explained to us that in expressing your views in favour of the election of the States' representatives and the protection of the fundamental rights of the States' people in the way you did, you wished it to be understood by the rulers of the States that if they did not agree to do what you urged upon them, you would not admit them into the Federation. You meant these to be essential conditions of Federation, but you did not express yourself in this categorical manner only because, at the time you spoke, Federation was still shrouded in uncertainty. If this be your meaning, we would entreat you to make it clear beyond the possibility of doubt, for we know that the rulers of the States are putting a different interpretation upon what you said. They are representing that you are ready to put up with nomination by the Princes, for instance, for an indefinite length of time. It is necessary that your meaning should be made plain, for the Swarajist Conference at Ranchi made it known that their party (which is now only a wing of the Congress) would follow the lines of your speeches at the Round Table Conference in framing the future constitution. Since, in the final determination of the Congress policy on these points, your personal view plays such a decisive part, we are anxious to know whether election of the States' people and a Declaration of Rights in their interest

are, in your opinion, merely desirable features of a Federation or essential conditions thereof. There are various other matters connected with the federal constitution which require careful consideration on the part of the Congress, but we do not wish to trouble you with them at the present moment. We would only beg you to give us an unequivocal statement of your views on the points raised in this letter.

*The unusual demand upon my time is the excuse for delay in replying to your letter of 22nd June last.

Instead of dealing directly with the points raised by you, I propose to define my own policy regarding the Indian States.

The policy of non-interference in the affairs of the States that the Congress has followed is wise and sound.

The States are independent entities under the British law. That part of India which is described as British has no more power to shape the policy of the States than it has (say) that of Afghanistan or Ceylon. I wish it were otherwise, but I recognise my impotency in the matter. India of the States is undoubtedly an integral part of geographical India. But that carries us no further than where we stand today. Portuguese and French India are also an integral part of geographical India, but we are powerless to shape the course of events there.

We enrol members from the States in the Congress. We receive considerable assistance from them. It is not want of appreciation or will that compels our non-interference. It is our helplessness. It is my conviction that any attempt on the part of the Congress at interference can only damage the cause of the people in the States.

But there is nothing to prevent us from urging the States to adopt a certain policy.

I am of opinion that whatever we are able to accomplish in British India is bound to affect the States.

I would like the States to grant autonomy to their

*The answer is a reply in the form of a letter written by Gandhiji on July 2, 1934.

subjects and would like the Princes to regard themselves as, and be in fact, trustees for the people over whom they rule, drawing for themselves only a small and definite percentage of the income. I have certainly not lost hope that the Princes will deem it a pride to become real trustees of their people. I do not seek to destroy their status. I believe in the conversion of individuals and societies.

What I said at the Round Table was in the nature of an appeal made to the Princes. It certainly did not imply that whether they listened to the appeal or not, the Congress would enter the Federation. I had no authority to bind the Congress to any such thing. The Congress entering the Federation had to depend upon many other circumstances beyond the attitude of the Princes. If ever Federation comes, it will surely depend upon mutual adjustment.

I hope I have covered all the points you have raised. If I have not, please write to me again. I have written this under great pressure of work.

Should Congress members be enrolled in Indian States?

This question has been frequently put and answered by me. I have always held that it would be inadvisable to enrol Congress members in the States. There is danger of friction and clash with authority, and the latter interfering with this work of organisation. Indian States' subjects, who may be anxious to become Congress members, can enrol themselves on the register of the nearest Congress office of their province in British India. But it would be better for them not to bother about membership, and to confine themselves to such activity as is possible within their own States. This can be largely only constructive work. It will arouse self-consciousness and solidarity among the masses. In fact, it may, on the whole, be better to make people Congress-minded, in the true sense of the term, than to enrol them as Congress members.

[HARIJAN—September 15, 1940]

What did you mean by saying in the last

week's *Harijan* that an 'all-India crisis' would occur if the Jaipur authorities persisted in prohibiting the entry of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj into the State?

Seth Jamnalal is an all-India man, though a subject of Jaipur. He is also a member of the Congress Working Committee, and essentially and admittedly a man of peace. He is the president of an organisation which has been working and has been allowed to work in Jaipur for some years. Its activities have always been open. It contains well-known workers who are sober by disposition and who have done much constructive work, both among men and women. There is at the head of affairs in Jaipur a distinguished politico-military officer. He is shaping the policy of the State in connection with the ban pronounced against Jamnalalji and his association, the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal. I take it that Sir Beauchamp St. John, Prime Minister of Jaipur, would not be acting without at least the tacit approval of the Central Authority, without whose consent he could not become the Prime Minister of an important State like Jaipur.

If the action of the Jaipur authorities precipitates a first-class crisis, it is impossible for the Indian National Congress and, therefore, all-India, to stand by and look on with indifference whilst Jamnalalji, for no offence whatsoever, is imprisoned and members of the Praja Mandal are dealt with likewise. The Congress will be neglecting its duty if, having power, it shrank from using it and allowed the spirit of the people of Jaipur to be crushed for want of support from the Congress. This is the sense in which I have said that the example of Jaipur, or say Rajkot, might easily lead to an all-India crisis.

The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion, a perfect piece of statesmanship when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-round awakening among the people of the States and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights. If once this is recognis-

ed, the struggle for liberty, wherever it takes place, is the struggle for all India. Whenever the Congress thinks it can usefully intervene, it must intervene.

[HARIJAN—*January 28, 1939*]

How the Congress as an institution and the Congress Ministries in the various provinces were justified in precipitating a crisis on an issue which exclusively concerned a State?

Supposing in a particular district in British India the Collector butchered the people of that district. is or is not the Congress justified in intervening and precipitating an all-India crisis? If the answer is 'yes,' then, it applies to Jaipur also for examining the conduct of the Congress in terms of intervention. If there had been no non-intervention resolution by the Congress, the question really would not have arisen. Therefore, unthinking people very often blame me for having said that constitutionally Indian States were foreign States. I do not accept that blame at all. I was wandering about in the States and I knew as a matter of fact that the people of the States were not ready.

The moment they became ready, the legal, constitutional and artificial boundary was destroyed. This is a tremendous moral question. Constitutionalism, legality and such other things are good enough within their respective spheres, but they become a drag upon human progress immediately the human mind has broken these artificial bounds and flies higher. That is precisely what is happening before my eyes. Without any spur from any outside agency, I saw at once that there must be intervention by the Congress of the type you see today. And it will go on from stage to stage, if the Congress remains the moral force that it has become—in other words if the Congress lives up to its policy of non-violence.

People say that I have changed my view, that I say today something different what I said years ago. The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same. My words and deeds are dictated by prevailing conditions. There has been a gradual evolution in my

environment and I react to it as a *satyagrahi*.

[HARIJAN—January 28, 1939]

What are your views about the recent developments in Rajkot and in Baroda, where the minorities were protesting against the Congress dictation ?

The movement for liberty cannot possibly be withdrawn or arrested because there are at the moment so-called communal splits. I see that history is repeating itself and the power that is losing ground is becoming desperate and fomenting trouble and dissension within, hoping to drag on its existence by means of these dissensions. If the people knew how to work the non-violent technique, the powers that are acting in this manner will be confounded and the people will rise victorious.

The Muslims in Rajkot, for instance, have everything to gain by the people of Rajkot securing liberty. They are today depending upon the sweet will, not of the Rulers but of the advisers of the Rulers ; tomorrow they will share power with the people because they are of the people. But I really do not believe that there is real Muslim opposition in Rajkot. They have enjoyed the best relations with the Hindus. I know this from personal experience myself. During the three months' brief but brilliant struggle, there was no dissension between the Hindus and the Muslims in Rajkot. Though many Muslims did not court imprisonment, the Muslims, as a community, remained at the back of the agitation.

I really do not understand this unfortunate squabble in Baroda. I am as yet too paralysed to get a full grasp of the situation. There again, what can Maharashtrians lose if there is self-rule in Baroda ? They are powerful enough to assert themselves. It is not as if they will be crushed by the so-called Gujarati majority. And, if the majority gets its share of the crumbs of office, that should not be a matter for non-participation by the Maharashtrians in the struggle for liberty. Hence, though I have not been able to fathom the bottom of

this quarrel, I have no misgivings so long as the reformers remain non-violent and do not harbour any ill-will against the Maharashtrians for their action. The question dwindles into insignificance, so far as Baroda is concerned, when it is remembered that against its population of 2,500,000 there are only a few thousands of Maharashtrians mostly to be found in Baroda city itself.

[HARIJAN—*January 28, 1939*]

*I know there is nothing we can expect unless we burn ourselves out peacefully and truthfully for the cause for which we stand. You must have seen how at the last meeting of the Working Committee of the State Congress, we laid down a time-limit of six weeks before commencing a programme of civil resistance. God is witness that we are anxious for peace. But there has been no enquiry into shootings which took place in nine places. Many lawyers convicted during the last campaign have been debarred from practising for two years. Nineteen members of the State Congress party in the Legislature have been disqualified just on the eve of the present session now sitting. Government had ample time to notify disqualification earlier and order re-elections in time. Now nineteen constituencies remain unrepresented. Fines have not been refunded. Confiscated property has not been returned. Cancellation of newspaper licences remain intact. One would have thought that the birthday amnesty would include all these. Instead, a systematic attempt has been made to destroy the State Congress volunteer organisation under another iniquitous regulation brought into force for that specific purpose. Just now, there are over 200 political prisoners. Many respectable people

*The question is taken from Shri Ramchandran's letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

have been arrested under section 90 meant for security proceedings against *goondas*. Fresh accommodation has been added in the Central Jail. Over one thousand special police have been recruited from among bad elements at the astounding monthly salary of Rs. 5. Can anything beat that? And as though the Travancore police cannot be trusted to do the dirty work, numerous police constables have been recruited from outside Travancore. The Government's policy of repression has gone on unabated, without fuss and without precipitating a frontal battle. That is why we feel compelled to lay down a time-limit of six weeks. I wish you to study carefully the papers I have sent to Bapu—specially, the two resolutions we passed at the last meeting of the Working Committee. I am oppressed with the idea that Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar's policy will create a gulf between the Ruler and the people.

I have refrained from giving in these columns the resolutions and the preface referred to in the letter. It is well for the reader to have these before him to enable him to judge what the State Congress is doing.

The documents make painful reading. What has happened since the amnesty has robbed it of the grace that should accompany generous amnesties, as this one on the birthday of the Maharaja was claimed to be. It was a spontaneous gesture. After-events seem to suggest that it was no gesture of generosity, but that it was a part of the tactics adopted by the authorities to allay the agitation that was rising against the Travancore Durbar and to divide the people in Travancore. If the information given by Shri Ramachandran is correct, the second object has not been gained and the first was partly achieved. For, the Indian Press was inclined to believe, after the release of prisoners, that the fight was over.

I would love to think that there was no sinister motive behind the partial amnesty. If so, it seems to

people remain unaffected by their denunciations.

It is a pity that things that may be usefully brought to light in the honest spirit of awakening the administrations of the States to their responsibilities are, for want of knowledge, never published. What is published is either in the nature of a gross exaggeration of facts of no vital importance, or, as is more often the case, some pure invention and, therefore, an utter lie.

Your present policy seems to me to be that where the people desire to manage their own affairs, it is the duty of the Congress to help them in the attainment of that aim. I venture to think that it is not your policy to replace the contentment of the people with discontent, in pursuit of the ideal of responsible government throughout India.

Above all, I take your policy to be to disseminate and propagate the truth, and to wage a ceaseless war against untruth. In the belief, I venture to suggest that an article or two in the *Harijan* on the responsibility of newspapers that depend for what they publish upon 'Congress workers' and that of those workers might help to purge the Congress movement of some destructive germs, and thereby make it more effective alike for the uplift of the down-trodden masses and for serving the highest cause of the country.

I have no difficulty in agreeing with the correspondent that newspapers which indulge in untruth or exaggeration harm the cause they profess to espouse. I admit, too, that there is enough untruth in enough newspapers to warrant action. But my experience is that no amount of public criticism will affect the policy of newspapers which make their livelihood by such policy.

I would like, however, to point out to my corres-

pendent and others like him who are connected with States, that the public must not be blamed for believing untruths if the State officials, under a false sense of security, will not deign to correct untruths or render explanations. And, sometimes, when they condescend to give explanations, they are more untruthful than the untruths of the newspapers. The latest instance is that of Talcher. The Chief denied even the truth of a telling photograph in *The Statesman* of the refugees and has received a well-deserved snub from its Editor. I have a Talcher bulletin sent to me by Thakkar Bapa for me to laugh or weep over. Its denial is a shameful perversion of truth. I am publishing in this issue startling news about Mewar. I would like an authentic contradiction of the news, or strong action against the police if they acted in disregard of instructions. But I write this in no way to condone untruths in newspapers. I am quite clear that if newspapers weighed every word that is printed therein, we should have a speedier removal of abuses, whether in the States or elsewhere.

[HARIJAN—February 18, 1939]

STATES AND SATYAGRAHA

In giving so much attention to Rajkot to the exclusion of all else, you seem to have lost all sense of proportion. It was your obvious duty to be at Tripuri. If you had been there, things would have taken a different turn. But you chose to undertake an indefinite fast. You had no right thus to disturb national life without notice. Why should you fast to make a Prince keep his promise? The people of Rajkot were offering civil disobedience. They would have become stronger in any case, if you had not suddenly stopped the movement. Surely, democracy cannot be built by your method. And then you, who taught India to shun Viceroys and Governors and such other functionaries who used to fill us with awe, are

now found dancing attendance on the Viceroy and awaiting His Excellency's pleasures, when great affairs demand your attention elsewhere. You are believed to oppose Federation, but you recognise the Chief Justice of the Federal Court and will not leave Delhi till His Lordship has delivered his Award. Truly, the ways of *Mahatmas* are strange.

To the hasty reader, this argument must make a forcible appeal. But one, who goes a little deeper into the subject and knows the working of *satyagraha*, should have no difficulty in seeing the falsity of the argument. Nor is there anything new in what I have done and am doing about Rajkot. Geographically, Rajkot is a tiny spot on the map of India, but the disturbance which I felt called upon to deal with was symptomatic of a universal malady. My endeavour in Rajkot was meant to nip the evil in the bud. I am of opinion that the result of the endeavour has so far benefited the whole of India. I acted the part of a wise general who never disregards the slightest weakness in his defences. Kheda and Champaran are but instances in point. Whilst they lasted, they occupied the attention of the whole of India ; and whilst the fight was going on, I had to devote the whole of my time and attention to them. It is a rare occurrence to have to deal with the whole front at the same time. We must distinguish between preparations for war and actual outbreak of a skirmish, be it ever so insignificant in itself. Tripuri was a preparation, Rajkot was a skirmish.

The fast is a most efficacious weapon in the armoury of non-violence. That it can be used only by the fewest possible persons is no objection to its use. It would be foolish for me not to use the talents given to me by God on the ground that others or all do not possess some of them. I have never heard it said that the use of special talents placed at the service of democracy can retard its even growth. I hold that such use stimulates it, as the Rajkot fast undoubtedly has. And why is the Rajkot fast to be condemned,

if the nation benefited by the previous fasts ? It is open to the critics to say that the previous ones were also criticised. So they were. But my point is that the nation gained by every one of them. What does arrest the growth of the democratic spirit is the outbreak of violence. I must ask the public to believe me when I say that if my fast did nothing else it prevented much violence.

I have no sense of shame about going to H. F. the Viceroy. I had invited him as the Crown Representative to perform his duty by intervening to enforce performance of a promise by a tributary of the Crown. I had not gone as a petitioner depending upon his mercy. It would have been churlish on my part to have sought his intervention and yet not to respond to his invitation to see him to discuss things. I have already acknowledged the handsome manner in which he acted during the fast. It was open to him to disregard it and take his time in deciding whether and when, if at all, he should intervene. But he did not do so. He recognised the nation's anxiety. And I have no doubt that his humane instinct, too, had a share in cutting short his tour in Rajputana in order to determine his action with sufficient quickness. I have no apology to offer for my attendances on the Viceroy. It is part of *satyagraha* to lose no opportunity of converting one's opponent or coming to terms with him on strictly honourable lines. I repeated on a small scale with Lord Linlithgow what I did with Lord Halifax when, as Lord Irwin, he was Viceroy of India.

Lastly, as to my acceptance of the Chief Justice of India as the interpreter of the Thakore Saheb's letter of 26th December last sent to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The Thakore Saheb interpreted it one way, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel another way. The Viceroy suggested interpretation by the Chief Justice of India. What was I to do ? Was I to say he must not, because he was Chief Justice of a Court which was a creation of the Government of India Act ? My sense of propriety would rebel against any such objection. Federation has come no nearer by my accepting Sir Maurice Gwyer's nomi-

nation as judge of the meaning of a document. If it comes as an imposition, it will come because of our impotence: born of our inability to bring into non-violent subjection the forces of violence that are growing in the country, and the increasing indiscipline and corruption in the Congress against which I have been raising my voice for the past twelve months.

It may interest the reader to know that Sir Maurice did not interpret the document in his capacity as Chief Justice of the Federal Court, but as a jurist of established repute. He who reads the judgment cannot fail to notice the pains he bestowed upon it.

[HARIJAN—April 15, 1939]

I have always felt that whatever Gandhiji has done at any time from his spiritual standpoint, has been proved to be correct from the practical point. He is not great for his enunciation of spiritual theories, which are to be found in the scriptures of all countries. His contribution to the world is his showing the way to put into practice, in the ordinary day-to-day life, those great spiritual theories. For me, if any of Gandhiji's actions done from a spiritual point of view failed to prove that it was *the* correct thing to be done from a practical standpoint, then he would be considered to have failed to that extent. Let me apply that test to what he did in Rajkot. When he discovered that his fast became vitiated by his having requested H.E. the Viceroy to intervene, he renounced the Gwyer Award. The practical effect was to free him from Rajkot. But did his renunciation free the Viceroy from the obligation of seeing that the Rajkot Notification was acted upon according to the Chief Justice's interpretation? In my opinion, Gandhiji's renunciation casts a double duty on the Viceroy. And if the Viceroy does not perform his duty, the people of Rajkot are free to act as they

choose, and the Congress will have a powerful case against the Viceroy if the Notification proved abortive.

This is an abridgment of an article sent by a noted Congressman for publication in *Harijan*. He has built up an elaborate case in defence of my action regarding Rajkot, in reply to the criticism that I had betrayed the cause of the Rajkot people. The heading* of this note is the correspondent's. I need not weary the reader with the whole of his argument. After all, time alone is the true test. It will finally show whether my action was right or wrong. But the abridgment is given for the novelty of the thought about the Viceroy's duty. I had no thought of the consequence of the renunciation. As soon as I say that my fast had become tainted for my seeking Viceregal intervention, I renounced the Award. But now that my correspondent mentions it, I must admit the force of his reasoning. My renunciation should act as a double spur to the Viceregal duty of seeing that the Rajkot Notification No. 50 is carried out according to the interpretation put upon it by Chief Justice. So far as I am concerned, my renunciation debars me, in this instance, from invoking Viceregal intervention. I also endorse the correspondent's statement that if any action of mine, claimed to be spiritual, is proved to be unpractical, it must be pronounced to be a failure. I do believe, the most spiritual act is the most practical in the true sense of the term.

[HARIJAN—July 1, 1939]

A careful study of the Dewan's† statement shows that he is trying to cloud the issue and mislead outsiders who are not aware of the sequence of events that he narrates. Excepting the threats of 'civil war' alleged by the Dewan, all the other events or occurrences happened subsequent to the promulgation

* Rajkot—Was It A Betrayal ?

† Dewan of Travancore's.

tions, become servants of their people, trustees of their welfare, and depend for their existence not on arms, whether their own or British, but solely on the goodwill of their people. Frightfulness will feed the fire of violence that one feels smouldering everywhere. If the States are badly advised and they rely upon organised violence for resisting the just demands of their people, *ahimsa*, so far generated in the country as a means of redressing social injustice, will not protect them. If it had grown into a Himalayan oak, it would have passed any test however severe. But, sad to confess, it has not gone deep enough into the Indian soil.

[HARIJAN—*September 17, 1938*]

The State method of dealing with *satyagraha* seems to be different from the British method. The methods adopted in some States are too inhuman and brutal. Will non-violence succeed against such brutal methods? Is it not permissible for us to defend the honour and respect of our women? The ordinary law of the land gives us that right. Then, why should we not exercise that right, when we are fighting such a brutal and inhuman machinery? I should like to be enlightened on these points.

I have carefully read and re-read your views on the murder of the Political Agent of Orissa States. I was rather pained to find that you made no reference to the terrible atrocities committed on the poor State subjects of Orissa. Is not the murder of the Political Agent a divine warning to the States' authorities to be more merciful in dealing with the people's fights? After all, between the State subjects and the Political Department, who deserves our sympathy more? If the mob was wrong in using violence against the Political Agent, was the latter justified in firing on the mob and thus provoking them to violence? And

what about the terrible repression for which the Political Agent was responsible ? I agree with you that the murder of the Political Agent is unfortunate* but who is responsible for it ? If the Ruling Chiefs of Orissa had been properly advised and led by the Political Agent, and if he had not been party to the terrible repression, certainly the people would not have gone out of control.

I agree with you that the event should be a warning to all of us who are conducting a mass movement in the State. But I fail to understand why you, as the greatest apostle of truth and non-violence, should not have also conveyed a warning to the Political Department of the Government of India, and especially the Eastern States Agency, that they should not adopt brutal methods in dealing with the States subjects' fights ? I feel that the Eastern States Agency has been most brutal in dealing with the States subjects' fights, and the murder of the Political Agent is the climax of the brutal repression carried on by the Eastern States Agency. Indeed, it is unfortunate, but the Political Agent himself was responsible for this. And if we are to show sympathy for the loss of life of the Political Agent, what about the two persons who died on the spot as a result, possibly, of the police violence ? If the victims of violence deserve our sympathy, why should not the victims of police violence

**Most Unfortunate :* The murder of Major R. L. Bazalgette, the Political Agent of Orissa States, is most unfortunate and comes as a rude shock. I tender my sympathy to the bereaved family. I hope that the Sudder, who accompanied the deceased, will recover from the wounds. The Praja Mandal is expected to carry on the strictest investigation and find out the case of the murder. It should be a warning to all workers to be most careful in conducting mass agitations. They should realise that the slightest departure from non-violence is bound to harm the movement for freedom, whether in the States or all India.—*Harijan* : January 14, 1939.

deserve as much sympathy as the victims of mob violence? To me, it looks that the Bazalgette murder is a warning first and foremost to the Government of India and the Political Department and also to the Ruling Chiefs, and then to us.

Of course, the right of self-defence is there and so is the right of armed rebellion. But after deep deliberation the Congress has abjured both and that for valid reasons. Non-violence is not worth much, if it is worsted in the face of the greatest provocation. Its true test consists in its capacity for standing any amount of provocation. If there were eye-witnesses of the rapes and if the witnesses were non-violent, why are they alive? If the rapes became known after the event, of what use is violence? The non-violent method is still open. The men may be tried or they may be brought up before the bar of public opinion, if there was any. To expose the criminals to mob fury would be barbarity.

The argument about the murder of the late Political Agent of the Orissa States is irrelevant to the issue. I was not called upon to adjudge the merits of the action of the Ruler and the Political Agent on the one hand, and the people's action on the other. It was enough for me at the time to condemn in unqualified terms the murder of the Political Agent, not merely as a mark of sympathy, though that was deserved, but as an act of gross indiscipline and breach of the fundamental Congress policy. The misdeeds of the Rulers have been exposed often enough in these columns. But they have been mentioned not for the purpose of drawing the wrath of the people upon the doers, but for the sole purpose of showing the people the way of dealing with them non-violently. Things were shaping themselves well in Orissa. I can quote chapter and verse in support of this assertion. This murder has disturbed the even course of the moment. Ranpur is a howling wilderness. The people, both innocent and guilty, are in hiding. They have deserted their homes in order to escape repression. For, it will not be merely

the actually guilty persons who will suffer. The technique of frightfulness, in some shape or other, is no doubt being applied, and the whole of India has to be helpless witness of it. The authorities know no other way of dealing with murders of their officials, especially when they are Europeans. The non-violent method has been slowly educating them to know the new way. But I need not prolong the argument. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Both methods are being tried out in India. The workers have to make their choice. I know that India's freedom is possible only through non-violence. Those workers in the Congress who think or act otherwise are wronging themselves and the Congress.

STATES AND PRAJA MANDALS

*The Patiala State Praja Mandal launched *satyagraha* against the *Hidayat* of 1988, a lawless law curtailing the civil liberties of the people. On your advice, the *satyagraha* was suspended unconditionally. The Publicity Officer, Patiala, on behalf of H.H.'s Government, stated in a Press *Communique* dated 15th April, that the Government would repeal or withdraw the aforesaid *Hidayat* within 3 to 4 weeks, and further stated that the Government had constituted a committee to go into its provisions and submit an early report. But the announcement has remained up till now a dead letter. And instead, H.H. has by *Ijlas-Khas* orders dated 25th May ordered the strict enforcement of *Hidayat* for a period of an other six months. In view of this, no

*I received, some weeks ago, an important letter from Patiala. It contained such grave statements attributed to the Maharaja Sahab of Patiala that I referred them to him for confirmation or otherwise. It is now more than three weeks since I wrote to him. But I have no reply. I, therefore, presume that the statements reported by my correspondent are substantially true. Here is the main part of the letter.—M. K. Gandhi.

propaganda of any kind can be carried on by the Praja Mandal workers, the provisions of the *Hidayat* being very wide and sweeping. The workers arrested in connection with this agitation are still in jail, and others are being tried. Apart from this, there is at present another movement going on within the State, *i.e.*, between landlords and tenants.

Some of the Praja Mandal workers were allowed an interview with H.H. on the 18th instant. During the interview, H.H. addressed them as follows :

"My ancestors have won the State by the sword and I mean to keep it by the sword. I do not recognise any organisation to represent my people or to speak on their behalf. I am their sole and only representative. No such organisation such as Praja Mandal can be allowed to exist within the State. If you want to do Congress work, get out of the State. The Congress can terrify the British Government, but if it ever tries to interfere in my State, it will find me a terrible resister. I cannot tolerate any flag other than my own to be flown within my boundaries. You stop your Praja Mandal activities, otherwise I shall resort to such repression that your generations to come will not forget it. When I see some of my dear subjects drifting away into another fold, it touches the very core of my heart. I advise you to get out of the Mandal and stop all kind of agitation ; or else, remember I am a military man ; my talk is blunt and my bullet straight."

It may be that my letter never reached the Maharaja Sahib, and that if it had, he would have disputed the correctness of my correspondent's letter. If any repudiation is received by me, I shall gladly publish it. But I must say that my correspondent is a responsible person.

Assuming, then, that the Maharaja did make the remarks quoted, it is a serious thing for any Prince, no matter how powerful he is, to use the threats the Maharaja is reported to have done. With due respect to him, I suggest that there is too much awakening among the people throughout India to be suppressed by threats and even corresponding action. The days of unadulterated autocracy are gone for ever. It is possible, perhaps by intense frightfulness, to suppress the rising spirit of the people for some time. But I am quite sure that it cannot be suppressed for all time.

I have no desire to eliminate the Princes. Friends have complained to me that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has, however, made such a statement although the Congress has enunciated no such policy. I have not had the opportunity of asking him about the alleged remark. But assuming that he did make the statement, it can only mean that some Princes are so acting as to bring about their own elimination. It is wrong to judge him by newspaper reports. His considered opinion is to be gathered from his statement on behalf of the Standing Committee of the All-India States People's Conference. Therein he has even warned people against hasty action. He is much too loyal a Congressman to contemplate any action in advance of known Congress policy. Therefore, the fear and hatred of the Congress on the part of some Princes are misplaced and are calculated to injure rather than help them. The Congress is not seeking to interfere directly in the affairs of any State. But the Congress does guide the States' people. They are part of the Congress organisation. They derive strength and inspiration from their connection with the Congress. I do not know how this organic relationship can be avoided. To wish its termination is like an attempt to make children disown their parents. For better or for worse, it is well to recognise the fact that just as the vast mass of people of British India look up more to the Congress than to the Government for the removal of their woes, even so do the people of the States look to the Congress for their deliverance. It

is under the Congress advice and inspiration that the people of the States say that they want to grow to their full height under the ægis of their respective Princes. I hope, therefore, that the Maharaja Saheb of Patiala, and those Princes who hold the opinion attributed to him, will revise their views and welcome the movement of their people for liberty to grow to their full height, and not regard the reformers in their States as their enemies. It will be well if they seek Congress aid in the settlement of their people's demands. But they need not do so, if they distrust Congress friendship. It is enough if they will placate the advanced section of their people by granting substantial reforms.

What is worse, in my opinion, however, than the alleged threat of the Maharaja is the breach of the promise referred to in my correspondent's letter. There is no doubt, so far as I can see, that the promise of withdrawal of *Hidayat* of 1988 was made; there is equally no doubt that the promise has been broken. It is a dangerous thing even for a rich and powerful Prince to break his plighted word. Breach of a promise is no less an act of insolvency than a refusal to pay one's debt. I plead with the Maharaja Saheb to redeem the promise and hope that his counsellors will advise him to do so.

MAHARAJADHIRAJ'S REPLY.

Ranbir Villa,
Chail, 9th Sept., 1939.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I thank you for your letter dated the 30th ultimo, enclosing a copy of the letter reported to have been despatched to me on the 3rd August which, as I intimated you in my telegram dated 28th ultimo, was never received by me. I was somewhat surprised to learn of the publication in the Vernacular Press of the letter from your correspondent, together with your comments, and was inclined to think that since you did not consider it worthwhile to await my reply before releasing to the Press your correspondent's letter, it was unnecessary for me to reply to your letter. However, I have since received your message, conveyed through my Vakil at

Simla, informing that whereas an intimation had been given in time to the English Press to withhold publication of this matter. owing to rush of work similar instructions could not be conveyed to the Vernacular Press. I am, indeed, thankful to you for intimating me that the comments that have already appeared in the Vernacular Press will be revised or withdrawn in case it was considered necessary on receipt of my reply.

Your correspondent's letter deals with two issues, namely :

(a) the *Hidayat* of 1938,
and (b) the threatening language alleged to have been used by me during the course of an interview I gave to the deputation that waited upon me on the 18th July.

As regards the *Hidayat*, which has for some time been the subject of some controversy and criticism, I would state the following facts to enable you to appreciate my Government's attitude in this behalf.

The *Hidayat* in question is essentially an emergency legislation which was promulgated in the State on the 15th January, 1932, to deal with the situation arising out of the 1932 Civil Disobedience Movement in British India and its repercussions on Indian States. While in British India, the situation was met by promulgating Ordinances and enacting other emergency legislations, such as the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1932 with its corresponding counterparts in the British provinces as provincial enactments, the *Hidayat* of 1938 was promulgated in the State to cope with all illegal and subversive activities connected with that movement in relation to its reactions in the State. In view of the changes in the general political situation, which have taken place since, the possibilities of the future requirements as also the fact that some of my subjects considered the conditions imposed by the *Hidayat* as irksome, I appointed on the 29th March, 1939, a committee to scrutinise the laws and regulations in force in the State and to suggest such amendments and modifications in the extant enactments as were called for to make them more suitable to the present require-

ments of my people. As the revision of the *Hidayat* was thus under the consideration of my Government, those who were organising agitation against it were informed by the District Magistrate that suitable orders would be passed regarding its revision, amendment or withdrawal as my Government would consider fit. In view of the fact that the *Hidayat* is an interstatal piece of legislation and, as such, could not be revised or repealed by a unilateral act on the part of one of the parties to it, the assurance regarding its revision could not be implemented without consulting the other parties. Meanwhile, instructions were issued to all the district authorities that since the *Hidayat* was an emergency legislation, intended to meet special situations, ordinarily its provisions should not be invoked as their regular enforcement would interfere with the right of the people of the State to hold public meetings for legitimate and lawful purposes. It is to be deplored, however, that the mischievous element, both within and without the State, hastened to abuse the liberty that the suspension of the *Hidayat* gave them, and meetings and processions were organised and outsiders were invited to address public meetings whose inflammatory utterances and activities greatly fomented communal ill-feeling and culminated in the communal clash on the 24th May, 1939, as a result of which one man was fatally assaulted and several others sustained injuries. As the demonstrations and counter-demonstrations arranged by the various communities tended to accentuate the growing communal tension and further breaches of peace were apprehended, I was constrained to order that for a period of six months the provisions of the *Hidayat*, particularly those relating to the public meetings and organisation of processions, should be rigidly enforced.

The main criticism against the *Hidayat* has been that since it was intended to meet a special situation, its retention as a permanent law of the land was not justifiable. The communal disturbances, as you will agree, were precisely the kind of special situation to meet which the Government have to keep themselves

armed with such special legislation. It will appear, therefore, that it is the abuse, by those who were responsible for disturbing inter-communal harmony, of the liberty conferred on them, which was responsible for the subsequent order enjoining the enforcement of the provisions of the *Hidayat*. The fact that this unfortunate occurrence rendered it necessary for me to invoke the provisions of the *Hidayat*, was appreciated even by those who had earlier organised agitation against this enactment, as is evident from their voluntary decision to abide by the order issued by me on the 25th of May. The period for which the enforcement of the *Hidayat* was enjoined is not yet over, however, as the communal situation has since eased considerably and I have exercised clemency and withdrawn cases against those involved in this communal clash, I would have considered the desirability of revising the provisions of the *Hidayat*, but as you are aware, War has since broken out and while, for the successful prosecution thereof, emergency measures curtailing civic rights and liberties are being enforced, this emergency legislation has of necessity to be retained on the Statute Book. I have not the least intention of going back over the assurance that was given by the District Nazim, Sunam, but I am obliged to await more favourable circumstances to do the needful.

As regards the version of what transpired at the interview I gave to the deputation on the 18th July, I am sorry your correspondent has twisted what I told the deputationists, and his letter contains several half-truths and mis-statements. I had assured them that while I was most anxious to redress the genuine grievances of my subjects, I did not approve of their being misled by those who were actuated by motives not wholly impersonal. I do not precisely remember the words I used, but I think I told them that I would readily respond to all legitimate wishes of my people but would not be intimidated by any agitation engineered by those not directly interested in the points at issue, nor would I accept any dictation from any outside

agency.

In view of what I have stated above, I feel your comments that have appeared in the Vernacular Press do not seem to be called for and I trust you will be good enough to withdraw them. I thank you for the courtesy you have shown me in inviting my comments on your correspondent's letter.

Yours sincerely,
YADAVINDRA SINGH

As doubt was raised whether my letter to His Highness the Maharajadhiraj was received or not, I sent a telegram to inquire whether it was received. As the reply came saying that the letter was not received, I recalled the foregoing article which had already been sent to the Manager of *Harijan*. Owing to great pressure, under which all who are assisting me are working, the article sent for *Harijan-Sevak* (Hindustani) was not recalled. Hence, I thought that the ends of truth would be served by publishing both my English article and His Highness' reply to my letter. The reply speaks for itself. It substantially confirms what my correspondent said about the *Hidayat* of 1932. It is to be hoped that the *Hidayat* will be repealed at an early date. When the very War which is going on is claimed to be fought for democracy, it ill becomes any Prince to curtail the liberty of the people without just cause.

[*HARIJAN*—September 16, 1939]

First Incident : Date of happening : 14th December, 1938. Place of happening : A way-side bridge in the British territory of town Deoli. Mewar territory : At a distance of about 12 yards.

Facts in brief : In the afternoon of 14th December, Shri Mathura Prasad Vaidya, a worker of the Mewar Praja Mandal, who had been doing propaganda work at Deoli on behalf of the Mandal, while distributing Praja Mandal literature sitting at the bridge, was all of a sudden attacked by two constables of Uncha police in Mewar.

One of them snatched away the literature he had and burnt it to ashes there and then. The other knocked him down on the ground and then both of them forcibly dragged him in a semi-conscious state to the nearby territory of Mewar only at a distance of about 12 yards, where he was taken under arrest. Vaidya Mathura Prasad was severely beaten by those policemen on the way to Uncha police station. He has now been sentenced for nine months.

Second Incident : Date of happening: 2nd February, 1939. Place of happening: On the outskirts of Deoli, British territory.

Facts in brief : Shri Maniklal Varma, Secretary of the Mewar Praja Mandal, had gone to Deoli, a town in the British territory of Ajmer-Merwara, on the 2nd February, 1939, to confer with some workers there. In the evening, at about 6-30 p.m., he with four other colleagues of his was all of a sudden attacked on the outskirts of the town by 15 men of Mewar police with *lathis*. All the five persons were badly wounded, and Maniklalji was then forcibly dragged through bushes and thorns in a most inhuman way to the Mewar territory, which was at a distance of at least a few hundred yards. The Deoli police was informed during the mishap but no notice was taken, and the Dewan of the police station could not be found even after a good search, as if the whole thing was pre-arranged. Maniklalji was arrested and taken to the Uncha police station in Mewar.

Shri Maniklalji belongs to Bijolia. He has been devoting himself to the service of the peasantry for the past 20 years. He founded the Praja Mandal a year ago. But it was declared illegal within a few days. Therefore, he started civil disobedience some

months ago. I send you these incidents as you have begun to write publicly about States' affairs. Will you kindly guide us, workers, also what should be done in such circumstances ?

This news is strange, if it is true. It is difficult to understand why the police did not arrest these workers within the Mewar border. Or, was it that the workers' friends were avoiding the Mewar territory ? In any event, the arrests seem to me to have been illegal. The dragging amounted to an assault. The only advice I can give is that this is essentially a case for legal proceedings. The Praja Mandal should take it up.

But civil resisters of the States should remember that the real battle has yet to come. The States, big or small, seem to be taking concerted action. They are copying the methods adopted by the British in British India during the *satyagraha* struggle, and are likely to improve upon them in frightfulness. They fancy that they have no fear of public opinion, for there is none in the States except in rare cases. But civil resisters, who are worth their salt, will not be deterred by any frightfulness.

[HARIJAN—February 18, 1939]

Ramdurg—a small State in the Bombay-Karnatak area, 169 sq. miles, population 33,997, revenue Rs. 269,000—was hard hit by famine and scarcity conditions, and also depression due to fall in prices for some years past. On 20th March, 1938, some agriculturists from villages gathered together in front of the palace and requested the Raja Saheb to grant some concessions in respect of land revenue. It was alleged, on behalf of those assembled at the palace, that they were dispersed by *lathi* charge by the Ramdurg police. On the other hand, these allegations were denied by the State authorities. It seems that no definite demands were made, on behalf of the people, nor was there

any organisation to speak for them. Some time later, some of the people of the State approached Shri Yalgi, a Congressman and one of the Secretaries of the Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee, and requested him to visit Ramdurg and see the situation for himself. Accordingly, Shri Yalgi visited Ramdurg in April and advised the people there to organise a committee to place their demands before the authorities. In accordance with his advice a body named Ramdurg Sansthan Praja Sangh was established, and on its behalf demands were formulated and submitted to the Raja Saheb.

A conference of Deccan States' people took place at Sangli on 22nd May, 1938, presided over by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He left Sangli on the 22nd. But the conference continued under the presidentship of Shri Gangadharrao Deshpande.

On the 23rd, the question of Ramdurg was taken and it was decided that a committee consisting of (1) Shri Gangadharrao Deshpande, President, K.P.C.C., (2) Shri Shankarrao Deo, Member of the Congress Working Committee, (3) Shri Munavalli, President, Ramdurg Praja Sangh, (4) Shri Kanabur, Secretary of Deccan States People's Conference, (5) Shri Andaneppa Doddameti, M.L.A., (6) Shri K. S. Patil, M.L.A., (7) Shri Ari, Pleader, Hubli—a subject of the State, was appointed to investigate and report on the Ramdurg affair. In the meantime, the Ramdurg Durbar, on their own initiative, had issued a proclamation and announced certain concessions. But the people were not satisfied with these concessions and the agitation was assuming a serious turn. It must, however, be noted that, in spite of very serious provocations on the part of the rowdy element, the State authorities

had absolutely taken no action which can be described as repressive.

Then, on the 5th June, 1938, the committee appointed at Sangli visited Ramdurg and instituted an enquiry. It was felt by the committee and also by the prominent representatives of the Ramdurg Praja Sangh, that a mere enquiry and report would not serve the purpose. Therefore, the latter requested the committee to bring about a settlement in respect of the demands which were submitted to the Ramdurg Durbar.

The matter was discussed for two hours and on the 6th of June, Shri Deo was entrusted with the sole authority of settling the differences. Shri Deo, in accepting the responsibility, made clear to the people all the implications of what they were doing. Shri Deo, on behalf of the committee, formulated the demands and submitted them to the Raja Saheb. After some discussions, the matter was postponed at the desire of the Raja Saheb. However, most of the suggestions, with slight modifications, were conceded by the Raja Saheb. Shri Deshpande wrote to the Sardar as to what had happened. He also informed him of the demands of the Praja Sangh and the offer of Raja Saheb. In reply, Sardar wrote to Shri Deshpande on the 11th June, 1938, to say that the terms offered by Raja Saheb could not be improved upon, that they were quite good, and that the people should be advised to accept them.

Though Shri Deo was entrusted with full powers to negotiate and settle the terms, he on the 21st June, 1938, took Shri Munavalli and all the members of the Managing Committee of the Praja Sangh into confidence, and after long discussion secured their assent to the terms settled between himself

and the Raja Saheb. The members of the committee appointed by the Sangli Conference, with the exception of Shri Shastri, who was absent, also agreed. The acceptance of the terms was communicated to the Raja Saheb. The same evening a *darbar* was held in the palace to which the president and representatives of the Praja Sangh and leading men of Ramdurg were invited. The Raja Saheb, in his opening speech, surveyed the history of his rule and gave the outlines of the terms of settlement. The Dewan, Rao Bahadur Pradhan, then read out the proclamation embodying the terms of the settlement. Thereupon, the President of the Praja Sangh, on behalf of the Sangh, thanked the Raja Saheb in suitable terms. After the *darbar* was over, Shri Deo and others went to the public meeting. The meeting was attended by more than 12,000 persons. The President of the Praja Sangh presided. When Shri Gangadharrao Deshpande was explaining the terms of the settlement a slight disturbance was noticed in one corner of the meeting. It was ascertained that they belonged to Sureban and were weavers. Shri Andanappa Doddameti went to that corner and successfully tried to restore peace. After Shri Deshpande, Shri Andanappa spoke for more than one hour and fully explained all the details of the terms and defended them very vigorously. He carried conviction to the audience and concluded his speech amidst enthusiastic cheers. Shri Deo also made a short speech, asking people to organise and strengthen their position by working the reforms granted. Shri Munavalli, the President, in his concluding speech, which was very touching, defended all the terms settled, and asked the audience whether they had confidence in him. The

audience with one voice replied in the affirmative. He, then, asked them to accept the terms and they assented. At the conclusion of the meeting, a paper, containing the terms of the settlement, was brought to the President for his signature by an officer of the State. Shri Munavalli, the President, again asked the audience whether he should sign it, and with concurrence of not only the large audience but of the representatives of the Praja Sangh, signed the document.

The Council of the Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee passed the following resolution :

"The Council congratulates the people of Ramdurg, Jamkhandi, Miraj Sr. and Jr. and Mudhol for the success they have achieved in their struggle for redress of their grievances, and trusts that they will strengthen their organisations by non-violent and peaceful means for the attainment of full responsible government in the near future.

"This Council expresses its sense of appreciation of the Rulers of the above States for readily responding to the demands of their subjects, and trusts that the terms of the settlement will be implemented by both the portions without delay. It also requests the Rulers of all the States in Karnatak to follow the liberal policy followed by the above-mentioned States.

"This Council, however, notes with extreme pain that anti-propaganda is being carried on by some people, and especially by some Congressmen, on the plea that the settlement arrived at by the efforts of prominent Congress leaders between the people and the Prince of Ramdurg. This Council, while requesting them not to carry on anti-propaganda, is definitely of opinion that the good of the people will advance only by standing by the settlement."

I have omitted some parts irrelevant for my pur-

pose. It appears that an attempt is now being made on behalf of the Ramdurg Praja Sangh to terrorise the Ruler into making further concessions. He refrains from taking action against the mischief-mongers for fear of losing Congress sympathy. The question I am asked is : " What are Congressmen involved in the settlement to do ? " Assuming the correctness of my information, my unequivocal answer is that they have to keep at any cost the plighted word of the Provincial Committee. I am going to Rajkot to entreat H.H. the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot to keep his word. The breach as I interpret his action, has shaken me to my depth. I can think of no other answer with regard to the Congress. Rajkot represents the Princely Order. Its shame or credit would be the shame or credit of the whole Order. If a representative Congressman breaks his word, the reputation of the whole Congress is at stake. How much more so if a Provincial Congress Committee cannot redeem its word ! The Congress claims to represent the whole nation. Its transactions must be above reproach.

In these days of awakening, all kinds of forces must rise up. Demands, even extravagant, will be made by new additions to the Congress. If they are in excess of Congress commitments, and if the Congress credit is to go up day after day, they must be checked. I do not know what the Ramdurg Praja Sangh claims. It may be that the claim is intrinsically sound. But they cannot enforce it by rowdyism and threats, even before the ink is dry on the settlement paper. The representative Congressmen in Karnatak have to stand by the Ramdurg Chief and see that the settlement is honoured by the people, even though in battling with them they should lose their lives.

[HARIJAN—March 4, 1939]

On page 67 of *Harijan* (of March 8, 1942)
there is a question* which is of great interest

* Q. Please clarify the position of the Congress *vis-a-vis* Praja Mandal Committees in States. Who should be responsible for political policies there ?

and importance to Praja Mandals in Indian States. The latter part of the question is : " Who should be responsible for political policies there (in States) ? " I am afraid that the answer does not sufficiently clear the position. From what appeared in this connection in *Harijan* before, and from the present answer, in an indirect way, it seems that you wish the Praja Mandals to be responsible for the political policy in the States concerned. It would follow that the local branch of the Congress would not independently initiate any political policy or come into conflict with the policy of the local Praja Mandal.

I think there was no confusion about my answer. The Congress organisation has its centre and chief work in British India. It has branches in some States. They are not expected to dabble in local politics. They are, therefore, advised to confine themselves to constructive work. But Praja Mandals have to do constructive work always, and political work properly so called wherever it is allowed, or where there are brave and able enough men to carry on the political struggle. It is, thus, purely a question of local ability and opportunity. At the present moment, when everything is in the melting pot, no heroics in politics are called for in the States.

[*HARIJAN—April 5, 1942*]

What is the duty, in the event of civil disobedience, of members of Praja Mandals in the States and the rest of the people of the States ?

If civil disobedience is started by the Congress, it will be as against the British Government. The people of the States cannot and ought not to offer any

A. Praja Mandals are independent bodies, having no official connection with the Congress. They may or may not take their inspiration from the Congress policies. Such being the case, I should advise them not to irritate State authority by an unnecessary identification with the Congress.

civil disobedience in the States. Hence it follows, that the Praja Mandals will remain unaffected by the Congress civil disobedience. But individuals of the States can, if they wish, join the civil disobedience campaign in British India. They can, therefore, send in their names to the nearest Congress Committee outside their State.

[HARIJAN—*April 13, 1940*]

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